

Wilderness Use

During Isle Royale’s early history, visitors risked much to get there. They did not come to vacation; they came to tame the wilderness through mining its copper, harvesting its fish and logging. The island was never tamed, the resource never conquered, but its landscape holds the scars of these early attempts. Today Isle Royale has reverted back to a primitive wilderness. The environmental conditions historically viewed as a burden are now attracting a new clientele. Today’s visitors as in the past, can still adversely affect this sensitive resource. To minimize your impact on park resources and other visitors please practice “Leave No Trace” principles (for more information visit the Leave No Trace website at www.lnt.org). Where you place your feet is as important as how you treat and dispose of waste. Be part of the solution: help maintain the sense of solitude and preserve the wilderness flavor, a flavor that has the potential to change your life. Proper wilderness use begins with reading, supporting, and putting into practice the following information.

Camping

Camping is broken into two party sizes: individual and groups. Individual parties consist of six members or fewer; camping is on a first-come, first-served basis. However, advance reservations are required for groups of seven to ten.

Camping Permits (Parties of 6 or fewer)

Permits are required for all overnight stays at campgrounds, cross-country sites, docks, or at anchor. Individual parties of six members or less can obtain permits onboard the *Ranger III* or upon arrival at Rock Harbor and Windigo Ranger Stations. When leaving the park, return permits to the Ranger Stations, noting any itinerary changes.

Group Camping Permits (Parties of 7-10 people)

A group is defined as any party of seven to ten persons, including leaders; advance reservations are required. If your party is larger, you must split into separate groups, each independent and traveling on completely separate itineraries. Organizations may not have more than 20 people camping on the island at any one time. For group

camping reservations and trip planning assistance, call (906) 482-0984; write to Group Reservations, Isle Royale National Park, 800 East Lakeshore Drive, Houghton, Michigan 49931-1869; or E-mail ISRO_GroupReserve@nps.gov. Groups can only camp at group tent site locations (shown on page six). Group leaders should carry medical information for each group member, such as known allergies, medications presently taken, and known medical problems.

Where to Camp

All campsites on Isle Royale offer tent sites and/or three-sided shelters. Shelters and tent sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Shelters may not be reserved or held for others prior to their arrival. From mid-July through August expect to find crowded conditions at the docks and campgrounds. When sites are full we ask campers to double-up and share empty tent pad space. Shelters may not be used solely for cooking or storage. Tents may not be erected at shelter sites. Be gentle with shelter screens and doors to prevent damage. Campers must stay in established campgrounds unless off-trail (cross-country) arrangements are made when registering for a camping permit. Off-trail hiking and camping is difficult at Isle Royale and is only recommended for experienced campers.

Commercial Groups

Organizations that charge trip participants a fee or that compensate members or trip leaders in any way are commercial groups under federal law. This applies to both non-profit and for-profit organizations. Commercial groups must apply for and receive an Incidental Business Permit (IBP) to conduct trips in the park. There is a fee for this permit. IBP applications are only accepted between January 1 and May 15; contact the park’s Chief Ranger’s Office at (906) 487-7148.

“Quiet, Please!”

Most visitors come to Isle Royale to hear the sounds of nature in a wild setting. Excessive human noise disturbs wildlife and other visitors. Sound travels easily over the water and on the trail. During quiet hours, between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. EDT, if people in adjacent campsites can hear your activities, you are being too loud.

Respect Wildlife

Observe, photograph, and enjoy park wildlife from a safe distance. If animals flee, become defensive, or change their natural activities in your presence, you are too close! Cow moose with calves, particularly in the spring, and bull moose during the fall rut can be dangerous; give them a wide berth. It is illegal to feed, touch, tease, or intentionally disturb wildlife, their homes, nests, or activities. Resist these urges or you may risk a painful bite. Animals, particularly fox and otter, when habituated to human food, may eventually overcome their natural wariness of humans and may have to be destroyed.

Human Waste

Proper disposal of human waste helps prevent pollution of water sources, minimizes aesthetic impacts to other visitors and reduces the spread of illness. Never defecate or urinate within 100’ of lakes, streams, trails, or campsites. Use outhouses where available. In areas without outhouses, select a site that visitors are unlikely to discover. With a small trowel, dig a “cathole” 6 to 8 inches deep and 4 to 6 inches in diameter. Place used toilet paper and fecal material in the hole. Use toilet paper sparingly. After use, cover the “cathole” with the excavated soil and disguise it with natural materials. Do not urinate on green plants. Urinate only on durable surfaces such as exposed rock, sand or gravel. Use toilet paper sparingly. Pack out all used feminine-hygiene products in plastic bags, doubled to confine odor.

Showers

The concession operation offers token-operated shower facilities at Rock Harbor (5/27 – 9/6) and Windigo (6/7 – 9/8). In the backcountry, use biodegradable soap and bathe 100’ or more from any water body.

Drinking Water

Potable water is only available at Windigo and Rock Harbor. All surface lake and stream water should be considered contaminated with natural parasites. Drinking contaminated water can make you

very sick. Water collected in the park should be boiled for at least two minutes, purified, or passed through a 0.4-micron water filter. Chemical treatment is not an effective method of water purification. If you boil your water, bring plenty of stove fuel. If filtering, bring a replacement cartridge for those filters that cannot be cleaned in the field. Precautions should be taken to prevent filters from becoming clogged. Filter water from a pot rather than directly from a lake or creek. Allow the sediment in the pot to settle and filter only from the cleaner water on top. Dehydration is a problem in hot weather. The Greenstone, Minong, and other trails become hot and dry, and creeks that once offered water may be dry. In addition, there is little or no dependable water available along many trails. To avoid dehydration, be sure to carry a minimum of 2 quarts of water per person. Drink as much water as possible while near water sources. Start hiking early before the day heats up – on ridges it starts getting hot at 10:00 a.m. on sunny days and gets hotter through late afternoon. Hike at a slower pace than usual and rest in shady spots. Watch for early warning signs of dehydration such as thirst, heavy sweating, fatigue, and a red face. Watch for signs of severe dehydration such as reduced or no sweating, headache, long stretches without urinating, dizziness, and nausea.

Pack It In, Pack It Out

It starts at home. Through careful meal planning and repackaging of food items, you can reduce food leftovers and trash in the backcountry. Please pack out everything you take in. Leftover food, food-scrap, orange peels, nutshells, apple cores, twist-ties, candy wrappers, fishing line, and cigarette butts must be packed out. If you have food leftovers, either save and eat them later or pack them out. Do not burn, bury or place trash, food scraps or garbage in outhouses. Please help keep the backcountry clean by packing out what you packed in.

